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# HINTS TOWARDS PEACE IN CEREMONIAL MATTERS

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THE following Hints have already been confidentially submitted to various Bishops and other leading Churchmen. The sympathetic recognition accorded to them has induced their writer to give them wider publicity. They were written previously to the *Plea for Toleration by Law in certain Ritual Matters*, by the Bishop of Lincoln, in which the writer welcomes practical conclusions so near akin to his own, and offered by one whose office and whose person alike command so great respect.





THE increased appreciation of ceremonial and art in the worship of the English Church within the last forty years is intimately connected with the higher tone of spiritual life, more thorough grasp of dogma, and wider munificence in giving to sacred purposes also characteristic of the period. Within due limits, therefore, it deserves all praise and encouragement. We must, however, own that it has, in various cases, transcended both the allowable licence of the Church of England and the counsels of prudence and charity, and has therefore provoked retaliation. Nor can we deny that, alongside of this growing taste for art and ceremonial, the older spirit of Puritan simplicity has strongly asserted itself in many directions. The collision of these two principles has resulted in a series of vexatious lawsuits, all originating with the anti-ceremonial party, and variously successful either way—the upshot being a condition of Church law which may well be termed chaotic. The latest of these suits which has been adjudicated on is the recent one of the Exeter reredos, and two more are now pending. No suit has, during the same period,

been entertained against any clergyman for defect of ritual.

The general conclusion at which a dispassionate man must arrive is that, irrespective of specific rites or "ornaments," the ceremonial law of the Church of England—as on the one hand a body whose continuous corporate existence ranges over nearly thirteen hundred years, and on the other a Reformed Church, the principles of whose Reformation have to be gathered out of statutes, rubrics, canons, articles, proclamations, advertisements, visitation articles, &c., dating from 1547 to 1662—is far from being a simple question. Another conclusion which may be safely entertained is, that it is beginning at the wrong end to simplify ecclesiastical proceedings till the *mos* or *lex* which has to be administered is rather more clearly defined. The process of court-making might otherwise be represented as one for forcing rather than working out a ceremonial system.

It is only within these last forty years that the more ceremonial side has, since 1662, been strong enough to assert a claim for specific recognition. It is now, however, an undoubted fact that numbers, both of clergy and of laity, have learned to attach the deepest importance to the recognition of a higher type of ceremonial in the English Church. The time, then, seems to have arrived for an attempt to regulate the *modus vivendi* between more or less ornate forms of worship, by way of conciliation

rather than of litigation. Some general principles must clearly govern such an agreement, and of these I venture to suggest the following:—

(1) Compatibility with the spirit of the Reformed Church of England as a whole, in its widest and most tolerant aspect, as represented by all the leading Churchmen of the Reformation century.

(2) Respect for primitive antiquity and the traditions of the Universal Church.

(3) Capability of proof without reference to the practices of the mediæval and later Church of Rome.

Not many years ago, such practices as the reservation of the chancel for the persons immediately concerned in the performance of Divine worship, and the adoption of choral service and of surpliced choirs, were often causes of fierce dispute. Now they have, happily, passed into the class of questions which settle themselves according to local circumstances. My object and desire is to pave the way for a similar happy consummation as to certain matters which at present seem to be of a contentious complexion.

Up to the date of the Purchas judgment, the position of the priest at the Lord's Table during the office of Holy Communion, and especially at the Prayer of Consecration, was believed to have passed into the class of self-adjusting questions. Up to the date of Mr. Justice Keating's judgment as to the Exeter reredos, the same could be said as

to the decoration of our churches with sculptures of sacred persons and scenes. Now, failing reversal, these two questions have lapsed into the contentious category. But I believe that I am advancing a reasonable proposition when I affirm that until they are recognised as allowable in themselves, there will be little prospect of stable peace for our Church. Those who feel deeply as to the position of the celebrant "before the table" can allege:—

(1) That the usage of the Universal Church (exception being of course made of those Anglican priests who have from time to time taken another position) points to the celebrant standing at the broad side of the Lord's Table, as the minister and representative of the congregation, offering in their name and in his own the commemorative sacrifice:—

(2) That the position of the priest in those old "Basilican" Churches, in which he stands at the further side of the altar and faces the people, is no exception to (1), inasmuch as in that case he faces the broad side.

(3) That the later usage, observed by the English Church before the Reformation, and by those members of it since who have taken the west side, is not, as falsely alleged, an attitude of turning his back to the people, but one of facing the same way as the people, of whom the priest is the præses and representative.

(4) That the usage of the Eastern Churches (in-

cluding the Armenians and the Separatist bodies), not to mention that of the Latin Churches in communion with Rome, of taking the west side, is also that of all the Protestant bodies which have preserved a liturgical framework of worship.

(5) That there is sufficient evidence of a continuous catena of clergymen in our own Church taking the west side from the Reformation down to our own day.

(6) That, in their opinion, the rubric inserted at the last revision under the influence of such theologians as Bishop Cosin, can only be literally read as signifying that the celebrant is to stand before the Lord's Table throughout the Prayer of Consecration, and that the passage of the judgment in *Martin v. Mackonochie*, relating to this rubric, can only be taken to mean this.

(7) That the difficulties attaching to the history of the question during the Reformation century can be solved by considering the practice, obsolete in and after 1662, of the Lord's Table being placed at Communion time lengthways down the chancel, so that the "north side" was really one of its broad sides, and standing at the north side was also standing before the table, while likewise this identical north side became the west one as soon as the table was turned round and put altarwise.

(8) That a remarkable evidence exists of the deep feeling which has, in our own time, grown up among English Churchmen regarding the position



in the declaration made (in my own hearing) at the Ritual Commission by that eminently cautious, moderate, and conciliatory Primate, Archbishop Longley. A proposal having been made to alter the rubric so as to enforce the Prayer of Consecration being read at the north end, the Archbishop rose, and, while explaining his personal non-adoption of the west side, begged the Commission not to touch the question, as any attempt to prohibit the practice would produce "exasperation" among the clergy. In consequence of this emphatic appeal the question was never again raised in the Commission, either during his primacy or that of his successor.

As to the Exeter reredos decision, all I will say is, that if it is to hold good, I cannot see how any prelate or public body can consent to retain possession of the illuminated MSS. or early editions of ancient service-books, which have heretofore been regarded as among the chief treasures of great libraries. The Act on which the judge relied, the 3rd and 4th Edw. VI., c. 2, which orders the destruction or defacement by a day named of images then existing, not of such as may hereafter be constructed, condemns with greater stringency the non-destruction or defacement of those books; for while it enacts fines and imprisonment as the punishment of neglect in regard to them, it omits to name any penalty for the non-destruction or defacement of the images.

I do not believe that the adoption or rejection of distinctive dresses for the celebrant and assistants at the Holy Communion in parish churches, or the adoption of lights (irrespective of their practical need) at the same holy ordinance, can, in the present state of feeling among Churchmen, be left to adjust itself irrespective of some superior and controlling jurisdiction. That jurisdiction would of course act in conformity with the expressed wishes and spiritual advantage of the habitual worshippers and communicants, and would (assuming that these rites were in any way admissible) possess ample powers of meeting the desires both of majorities and of respectable minorities, by possibly prescribing varying rites at different days or hours. I attach particular importance to this consideration. If it could be settled that certain forms of worship should be permitted at certain hours, no one could complain of being taken by surprise.

As to the distinctive dress at the Holy Communion, the question has really been brought within a very narrow compass. A prescription of such dresses applying to all churches is unquestionably found in a rubric of the Prayer Book of 1549, and is, as many contend, re-enacted in the existing ornaments rubric. Another prescription of such dresses (which may either be supplementary to that rubric, and intended to enforce a minimum of compliance with it, or else falling short of it, and intended to supplant it), only mentioning their

use in cathedrals and collegiate churches, is found in the 24th and 25th Canons of 1603.

The Judicial Committee in *Hebbert v. Purchas* rejected the wider prescription of the dresses contained in the rubric, but reaffirmed the narrower one of the Canons; and since that judgment several distinguished prelates and dignitaries have adopted such dresses under the conditions which the Canons lay down. But the principle underlying the rubric of 1549 and the Canons of 1603 is confessedly the same, that of doing the highest material honour to Almighty God at the highest act of worship. Thus the question is reduced to a very narrow issue, not of principle, but of detail. "Does the 24th Canon contemplate a *maximum* or a *minimum* use of the given ceremonial?" At this point surely negotiation may come in; and I will only, in passing, observe that the idea that the Canon lays down a minimum is strengthened by the fact that the 13th, 14th, and 15th Canons regarding public worship only deal with Sundays, feast-days, and eves, and Litanies on Wednesdays and Fridays. It will surely not be contended that this is intended to repeal the rubric enjoining the daily recitation of morning and evening prayer either publicly, or at least privately, on the part of the clergy. The expression used respecting the Prayer Book in the 14th Canon, "without either diminishing in regard of preaching or in any other respect, or adding anything in the matter or form thereof," of course



negatives the supposition, and indirectly reaffirms the ornaments rubric. These Canons are clearly intended, while leaving the Prayer Book prescription untouched, to lay down a practical minimum observance of the *public* recitation in church of the appointed offices. So, too, I believe the 24th Canon leaves the ornaments rubric unrepealed, while it prescribes the minimum use of vestments, namely in cathedrals and collegiate churches. If the 24th Canon is read attentively in connection with the 25th, it will be seen that it does not order that "copes" and the dresses "agreeably" worn by Epistler and Gospeller shall only be the costume at the principal feasts, but that on those feasts the Bishop, Dean, or some Canon or Prebendary (and not a minor Canon), shall always be the celebrant, and shall therefore be so attired. In the Injunction of the 7th of Elizabeth referred to in the Canon, the "principal minister" is ordered to wear the prescribed dress "at the Ministration of the Holy Communion," without any reference to principal feasts. The ruling provision of the 25th Canon "in time of Divine Service and Prayers in all cathedral and collegiate churches, where there is no Communion, it shall be sufficient to wear surplices," would be unintelligible if the preceding Canon did not order that when there was Communion the cope should be worn.

The question of lights upon the Holy Table cannot be reduced to so definite an issue. The direct

claim of the post-reformational Church to use them is found in Edward VI.'s Injunction of 1547, which, after forbidding other lights, enjoins "two lights upon the high altar before the Sacrament, which, for the signification that Christ is the very true Light of the world, they shall suffer to remain still;" and the practice is one which can be defended on high grounds of religious congruity, while there is considerable historical evidence as to its continuous existence in the later English Church.

Speaking generally of these two rites, they quite stand the test of being capable of proof, irrespective of Roman usage. Even conceding that the pre-reformational English Church must in ceremonial matters be reckoned as a branch of the Roman communion, vestments are found not only in the Eastern Churches, but in the Protestant Churches of Scandinavia, and altar-lights in the latter, as well as in the Lutheran and "Evangelical" Churches of Germany; while the use of copes has, under certain conditions, been continuous in the Church of England. The number of Churchmen who would deeply deplore a formal abrogation of these rites, as severing a link which binds us to the Universal Church, is incommensurate with that of those who see their own way to adopting them, for the former are, I am convinced, a very large number.

As to extra services and variations in the existing offices, powers of allowing both, hitherto un-

known, are contained in the Lectionary and Shortened Services Acts, which seem capable of a wider application than they have hitherto received, and might, if judiciously applied, meet many recently developed religious wants.

I have in this memorandum intentionally considered the question from the High Church side, and I have refrained from hinting too precisely at the limits within which vestments and lights might be allowed. The first stage in the negotiation is to agree that there shall be an allowance, and that there shall be limits. After that, the details will have to be settled. It may be urged that negotiations are premature while the Liverpool and Prestbury cases are still unsettled. I contend, on the contrary, that the interval affords a rare opportunity for an impartial consideration of the broad question in view of the whole Church of England as it stands, with its co-existent ceremonial and anti-ceremonial parties, with their various shades, and its large number of neutral members. Whatever may be the judgment in those two cases, the two parties will still remain, of which one or the other, if not both, will certainly be disappointed at the results. Can the interval, then, be better employed than in reaching some *modus vivendi* which should be honourable and possible under any formal adjudication of the disputed points? All the points in question have reference to the celebration of the Holy Communion, and are therefore properly the

concern of communicants in distinction to the floating body of doubtful Churchmen. If we could attain a *modus vivendi*, not only would the peace of the Church be made more possible than it is at present, but difficulties which now seem enormous in the way of reforming and simplifying procedure would to a very great extent be cleared away.

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